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CHINA PLAYS DOWN REPORTS OF FLU OUTBREAK, SAYS IT'S SAFE TO VISIT

China's foreign ministry said there is no massive flu outbreak in the country and that its hospitals are not overwhelmed by the influx of flu patients

'RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS LESS THIS YEAR'

"Respiratory infections tend to peak during the winter season in the northern hemisphere," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters in Beijing in response to a question on the spread of Human Metapneumovirus and influenza A. "The diseases appear to be less severe and spread with a smaller scale compared to the previous year," she said

INDIA ALERT, CLOSELY MONITORING SITUATION

- The National Centre for Disease Control under the Union health ministry said it is closely monitoring influenza cases in the country, and is in touch with international agencies in the wake of reports of an outbreak of the Human Metapneumovirus in China
- Officials said there is no substantial increase in flu infections in India

HMPV

IS LIKE ANY OTHER RESPIRATORY VIRUS WHICH CAUSES COMMON COLD

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SBI RESEARCH

Rural poverty fell to record low of 4.86% in FY24: Report

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mumbai

HIGHER consumption in the lowest 0-5% decile and government support programmes have significantly brought down poverty in India — both rural and urban — an SBI research report released on Friday said.

Rural poverty crashed to 4.86% in FY24 from a high level of 25.7% in 2011-12, while urban poverty dropped to 4.09% from 13.7% in the same period, the report noted. In FY23, rural and urban poverty rates were 7.2% and 4.6%, respectively.

"The sharp decline in rural poverty ratio is on account of higher consumption growth in lowest 0-5 per cent decile with significant government support and such support is important as we also find that change in food prices has a significant impact on not just food expenditures, but overall expenditure in general," the report said extrapolating the latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation. The survey showed that consumption inequality in both rural and urban areas declined during the August 2023-July 2024 period compared to a year ago.

According to Soumyakanti Ghosh, group chief economic advisor at SBI, urban poverty could decline further.

"At an aggregate level, we believe poverty rates in India could now be in the range of 4-4.5% with almost minimal existence of extreme poverty," the report said.

Govt notifies draft rules for digital privacy

Children aged below 18 need parental consent to create social media accounts

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

CHILDREN under 18 will require parental consent to create social media accounts, according to the new draft regulations for the Digital Personal Data Protection Act. If data fiduciaries—entities that process data—transfer Indians' personal data abroad, they will have to strictly comply with some additional rules set by the Central government.

The draft, titled Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2025 and released by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) on Friday, provides for the government and its agencies to process Indians' personal data in order to give subsidies, benefits, services, certificates, licences, or permits. The draft, which outlines how companies and government agencies should handle digital personal data, is open for consultation till February 18.

As per the draft rules, any company or organisation using personal data must seek the individual's consent. They must clearly inform the individuals (data principals) about the purpose of data processing. Also, they need to provide a detailed description of the goods or services that will be offered.

The draft norms say data fiduciaries must implement reasonable security measures to protect personal data, such as encryption, access control, monitoring for unauthorised access, and data backups. In the event of a data breach, the data processing entity must promptly notify all affected individuals.

Under the new regulation, children below 18 years will need their parents' consent to create social media accounts on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. When collecting a child's personal data, the data fiduciary must obtain verifiable consent from the parent. To ensure this, the company must verify the parent's identity and age using reliable sources, such as government-issued IDs or digital locker services.

NO MENTION OF PENALTY CLAUSE

The draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules don't mention penalties that were approved under the 2023 Act, which had a provision to impose a penalty of up to ₹250 crore on data fiduciaries in case of personal data breach

DATA OF INACTIVE USERS TO BE DELETED

If a company collects your data for a specific purpose but you don't use it for a certain period, then it must delete your data. However, before deleting the data, the company must notify you 48 hours in advance

State's demand for energy to go up by 5% this summer

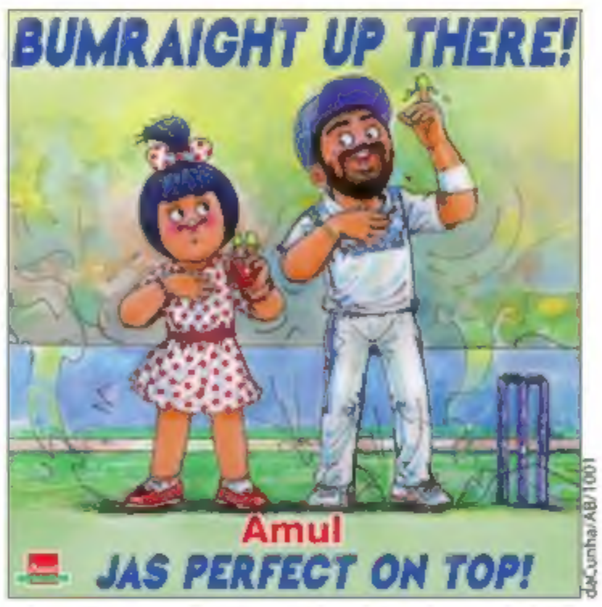
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE energy department has forecast a rise in demand for power by at least 5% in the coming days in view of increasing temperatures.

A team from the department also forecast that the demand would go up to at least 340 million units a day during the first six months of 2025.

"While last year, the demand was less because of a good monsoon, this time, we are expecting it to go up. During 2023-24, we saw a peak demand of 17,220 MW. This year, we are expecting it to increase to 18,000 MW in the first six months," a senior official told TNIE. This was discussed with Energy Minister KJ George on Friday at a review meeting. The department will depend more on hydel power stations this year, the official said.

"Power purchase agreements, which Karnataka had with other states, will also be utilised. They will first be utilised during early days of summer. We have appealed to farmers to install solar-based irrigation pumpsets so that the load on the grid is managed effectively," the official said. P5



One of the sites suggested to former PM Manmohan Singh's family for his memorial | PARVEZ SULTAN

GOVT AWAITS FAMILY'S WORD ON MEMORIAL SITE

PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

TWO adjoining sites measuring about 2,000 sq ft each within the Rashtriya Smriti Sthal in the Capital await approval from former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's family to house his memorial. They are yet to pick one.

After the visit of senior officials of the ministry of housing and urban affairs, the staff on Wednesday cleaned up the spots and pruned the grass there. According to the officials, an estimate of construction has been prepared and the allotment formalities will be initiated once they get word from Singh's family.

Spread over about 45 acres, the Rashtriya Smriti Sthal complex is sandwiched between Ring Road and Salimgarh bypass along the Yamuna bank.

The two sites are next to the memorial of P V Narasimha Rao. They are surrounded by paved pathways and flanked by the memorials of former presidents and prime ministers Zail Singh, Shankar Dayal Sharma, R Venkataraman, K R Narayanan, Chandra Shekhar and I K Gujral. The Sthal also has Sadaiv Atal, a memorial park where former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was cremated.

The staff posted at the Sthal was expecting a visit by Singh's family on Friday. However, no information was available about the visit till late evening.

SPOT THE SITES

1. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's memorial
2. P V Narasimha Rao's memorial
3. R Venkataraman Samadhi
4,5: Vacant sites suggested to Manmohan Singh's family for building his memorial
6. I K Gujral's memorial

This newspaper had on Thursday reported that the government had decided to allocate land to a trust to be set up for the construction and maintenance of Singh's memorial after receiving approval from his family.

"The trust to be set up in Manmohan Singh's name will build the memorial. The response of the family is awaited. The allotment formalities can only be initiated after the constitution of the trust. It may take about a week. This has been the practice. In the case of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a trust in his name had already existed. A senior official of the ministry was on Thursday entrusted with the task to inform the family about the possible location of Singh memorial," said officials.

The Congress veteran passed away on December 26 and his funeral took place three days later at Nigambodh Ghat. After Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge sought space for a memorial, the Union Cabinet set the ball rolling. In 2013, the then government had resolved not to allow separate memorials for dignitaries near Rajghat because of scarcity of space.

EXPRESS READ

Fate of Nimisha Priya hangs in balance

New Delhi: The fate of Nimisha Priya, a nurse from Kerala who is on death row in Yemen, remains uncertain as efforts to contact the family of the Yemeni national she is accused of murdering, to offer blood money, have not yet been successful. Priya, who hails from Kollengode in Palakkad district, was arrested in August 2017, and in 2020, a court in Sanaa sentenced her to death | P9

Woman jumps off auto as driver takes different route

Bengaluru: A 30-year-old woman jumped off a moving autorickshaw when the driver took a different route in the city on Thursday. Amruthahalli police arrested the driver, who was said to be drunk, on Friday. The incident came to light after her husband's social media post, tagging the city police. The woman had booked the auto on the Namma Yatri app | P3

FIERY

PROTEST TO BHOPAL TOXIC WASTE

A leaderless protest in Madhya Pradesh's Pithampur town against the transport of Union Carbide's toxic waste from Bhopal, became fiery as two protesters sustained burns after attempting self-immolation | P10

Creating counties in Ladakh unacceptable: India to China

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

NEW Delhi has lodged a "solemn protest" with Beijing against its creation of two new counties last month in Hotan prefecture, as parts of these regions fall within the Union territory of Ladakh.

New Delhi also conveyed its concerns to Beijing about China's plan to build a massive hydropower dam in Tibet on the Yarlung Zangbo river, which flows into India. The Yarlung Zangbo becomes the Brahmaputra as it exits Tibet and flows south into Arunachal Pradesh and Assam before entering Bangladesh.

In a strong response, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the creation of new counties will not affect India's long-standing and consistent position on its sovereignty over the region, nor will it legitimise China's "illegal and forcible" occupation of the area.

"We have seen the announcement pertaining to the establishment of two new counties in Hotan Prefecture of China. Parts of jurisdiction of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory of Ladakh," he said, adding: "We have never accepted the illegal Chinese occupation of Indian territory in this area."

China's state-owned media Xinhua reported on December 27 that the government of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region announced the establishment of two new counties in the region — He'an County and Hekang County. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and the State Council approved them, it said.

As for the dam, "The Chinese side has been urged to ensure that the interests of downstream states are not harmed," Jaiswal said. "We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests," he added.

CLASH OF EMOTIONS

Late on Day 1 of the final Test in Sydney, emotions took centre stage when Jasprit Bumrah was visibly upset with Australian opener Usman Khwaja for taking too much time to face the ball. Sam Konstas, at the non-striker's end, got involved as tempers flared before Bumrah had Khwaja's wicket off the last ball of the day | AP | P15

Nadda: Integrated health policy soon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

INDIA is set to launch a new health policy that will bring together yoga, ayurveda, and naturopathy with modern medicine, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said on Friday.

He was speaking at a function to inaugurate S-VYASA Deemed-to-be University – School of Advanced Studies (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana) campus at Sattva Global City IT Park.

Nadda said this change will help create a healthier future for generations to come and highlighted the need of more institutes such as S-VYASA university, which not only offers courses in engineering, computer applications, and management, but also focuses on yoga, naturopathy, and ayurveda for the comprehensive development of students.

Minister JP Nadda speaks at a function to inaugurate S-VYASA Deemed-to-be University in Bengaluru on Friday

Nadda highlighted how yoga can work alongside modern science to shape a better future and lauded institutes such as S-VYASA for their role in promoting this blend of ancient wisdom with contemporary health practices. Nadda also highlighted the growing importance of yoga and ayurveda worldwide, with S-VYASA's influence now reaching 30 countries.

Referring to major initiatives in the health sector by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said 22 All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) are now functioning across the country. All AIIMS now have separate AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) blocks across the country. "This reflects the government's effort to ensure that traditional systems of medicine are included in modern healthcare education and treatment," he added.

After bus fare, K'taka govt mulls ₹3-5 hike in milk price

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A DAY after its decision to increase fares of four state-owned road transport corporations (RTCs), the Siddaramaiah government is planning to hike prices of milk. There are 16 milk unions under KMF and nearly 40 lakh dairy farmers in the state. On an average, one crore litres of milk is procured daily, making Karnataka a top state in dairy farming. Earlier, Siddaramaiah hinted at a milk price hike.

Minister for Animal Husbandry K Venkatesh told *TNIE* on Friday that there is pressure from dairy farmers and other stakeholders to increase milk prices. "They want the price to be increased by ₹8 to ₹10 a litre. The reasons they stated are prices of fodder and other essentials for dairy farming have gone up. We may have to take a call soon," he said.

He said he would consult the CM before taking a decision. "We have not decided whether to increase it by ₹3 or ₹5, but we have a demand to increase it by ₹10," he added. On when the decision would be taken, he said soon, adding that ahead of its budget, the government should have clarity on its revenue.